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**Human Services Committees Public Hearing, February 10, 2011**

Testimony regarding:

SB840 An Act Concerning Educational Activities for Participants in the Jobs First Program;

HB 5558 An Act Concerning Educational Opportunities for Recipients of TANF under the Jobs First Program;

HB6218 An Act Establishing A Task Force on Safety Net Services; and

HB5432 An Act Concerning Limits on Sanctions Under the TANF Program

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Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak, and Human Service committee members, thank you for your time.

My name is Shannon Lane. I am a social work professor and a member of the Education and Legislative Action Network of the Connecticut chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. I would like to provide some information in support of four of the bills before this committee today that have a significant impact on the populations served by social workers across the state of Connecticut.

1. First, I urge you to support SB 840 regarding welfare extensions for education and subsidized work activities and HB 5558 allowing educational activities to satisfy work experience for Temporary Family Assistance recipients. As a social worker, I believe in the power of education to change the lives of those in poverty. Many users of TANF/TFA are in a position where education and training could provide them with an opportunity to move out of poverty, to find jobs that support themselves and their families, and to eliminate or reduce their need for a safety net. 21 months worth of benefits may keep the wolf from the door temporarily, but it does not provide recipients with the resources they need to improve their lives. Obviously, the price tag of every bill is important this year, but this is an investment in the long-term futures of individuals and their families and I urge you to support these bills.
2. Second, I encourage you to support HB 6218, to establish a task force on safety net services. We need to be sure that the most vulnerable in our state are getting access to the services they require in this time of need. In addition, we need to be sure those services are provided as competently, humanely, and efficiently as possible. However, I believe that those who are using those services should be represented on this task force—their experiences with our safety net system are valuable and should inform the discussion. Please support this task force, with the addition of representation on the task force by the public.
3. Finally, I ask your support of HB 5432, which limits sanctions on TANF recipients and uses best practices from other states as a model for practice in this area. This legislation would allow for leniency in removing benefits if only one family member is not complying with program requirements. It would also provide for a review before a family is removed from the rolls. This legislation would make it easier for family members who are following the rules to deal with the results of another family member's noncompliance.

I urge your support of this legislation. I am sorry that I cannot be here today in person, but I would be happy to answer any questions via phone or email. Thank you for your time.